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The situation in the Middle East

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Letter dated 2 June 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

As we mark the third anniversary of Israel's withdrawal from south Lebanon, I wish to draw your attention to the continuing failure of the Lebanese Government to comply with its international obligations to eliminate terrorism from its territory and in particular, to bring an end to ongoing violations of the Blue Line by the terrorist organization Hizbullah.

On 24 May 2000, Israel completed the withdrawal of its forces from south Lebanon in full compliance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978). Last week marks the third anniversary of the withdrawal, which has been confirmed inter alia by the Secretary-General (see S/2000/590 and Corr.1) and by the Security Council in resolutions 1310 (2000) and 1337 (2001), as well as by the statement of the President of the Security Council of 18 June 2000 (S/PRST/2000/21).

Despite Israel's full and confirmed compliance with resolution 425 (1978), the Lebanese and Syrian Governments persist in refusing to live up to their obligations under the norms of international law and the provisions of resolutions 425 (1978), 426 (1978), 1310 (2000) and 1337 (2001), which call for the restoration of international peace and security and the return of the effective authority and presence of the Government of Lebanon in the south. At the time of the Israeli withdrawal, the Government of Lebanon stated that it would respect the Blue Line as identified by the United Nations (see paragraph 5 of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2001/66) dated 22 January 2001 and the statement by the President of the Security Council (S/PRST/2000/21) dated 18 June 2000). In November 2000, Lebanon reversed its position, claiming the right to use force against Israeli troops in the area. On 20 May 2002 the Secretary-General reaffirmed that any attack across the Blue Line, including in the Shab'a Farms area, constitutes a violation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) and subsequent Security Council resolutions, as well as of established principles of international law.

Moreover, the Government of Lebanon has postponed deployment of security forces in the south Lebanon area, thereby preventing the restoration of an effective

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Lebanese authority, in clear violation of international law and Security Council resolutions 425 (1978), 426 (1978), 1310 (2000), 1337 (2001), 1365 (2001) and 1391 (2002). Lebanon's failure to take measures to ensure a calm environment in south Lebanon indicates a continued disregard for the integrity of the Blue Line.

The Government of Lebanon is also in violation of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) and established principles of international law, which clearly call upon all States to refrain from providing any support, whether active or passive, to all persons or entities involved in terrorist acts, and to ensure that their territory is not used as a base for cross-border attacks.

Lebanon continues to support the launching of provocative acts of terrorism and aggression from its territory, most significantly by refusing to freeze the assets of terrorist organizations such as Hizbullah, by harbouring known terrorists, and by permitting the organization to build an infrastructure in Lebanese territory, including the accumulation of a full armory of mortars, rocket launchers, recoilless guns, artillery guns, anti-tank missiles, anti-aircraft, small arms, explosive charges, and sniper rifles.

The terrorist organization Hizbullah, with a continuous record of international terrorism, continues to use southern Lebanon as a launching pad for terrorist acts, often with the support of Syria and Iran, in violation of international law and Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 1373 (2001). Hizbullah's support for the strategy of terrorism is elucidated by ongoing belligerent statements of the organization's leadership, which include praise for Palestinian suicide bombers and pledges of continued support for terrorist activities targeting civilians worldwide, and the export of suicide terrorism against Western countries. This clear disregard for international law presents a genuine threat to peace and security in the region and an obstacle to the global counter-terrorism campaign.

In the nearly two decades since its founding, Hizbullah and its operatives have supported and perpetrated numerous terrorist actions, both in the Middle East and beyond, including the bombing of the Multinational Force headquarters in Beirut in 1983 that claimed the lives of 240 United States Marines and 58 French soldiers; the hijacking of a TWA jetliner in June 1985, in which one person was killed; the bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires in 1992, which killed 34; the bombing of the AMIA Jewish Community Center in the same city in 1994, in which 86 people were killed, with the assistance and support of Iran as has been recently and conclusively documented.

Moreover, Hizbullah actively supports and participates in Palestinian terrorist activities, designed to harm Israeli citizens and prevent any chance for a political process that could bring peace to the region. Most recently on 22 May 2003, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) intercepted a fishing vessel off the coast of Lebanon transporting a known Hizbullah bomb-maker, as well as materials and directives used to carry out terror attacks and suicide bombings. In this connection, Israel calls on the Palestinian leadership, in accordance with its obligation to dismantle the terrorist infrastructure and end its support for terror, to sever all ties with Hizbullah and to delegitimize its activities in support of terrorism by other Palestinian terrorist organizations.

Hizbullah's terrorist operations across the Blue Line have continued in the past two years, despite Israel's full withdrawal from Lebanese territory. There have been more than 100 cross-border attacks carried out chiefly by Hizbullah along the northern border of Israel since the Israeli withdrawal. In recent weeks, Hizbullah

terrorists have repeatedly fired machine guns, anti-tank missiles and mortar bombs at targets on the Israeli side of the Blue Line. These clear and aggressive violations of the Blue Line have resulted in five Israeli civilian deaths, eight troop casualties and many wounded. Israel has exercised great restraint in the face of these ongoing and violent provocations while Hizbullah has knowingly endangered civilian communities on both the Israeli and Lebanese sides of the Blue Line. Nevertheless, in the face of the continuing threat from Hizbullah and the refusal of Lebanon and Syria to comply with their international obligations, Israel continues to reserve its right to self-defense.

Syria, in addition to the Government of Lebanon, also bears direct responsibility for violations emanating from Lebanese territory. Syria is the main power broker and occupying force in Lebanon, exercising an overwhelming degree of control in the significant portions of Lebanese territory that it occupies. The Syrian Government's support of Hizbullah, and its permitting of overland arms transfers from Iran to Hizbullah through Syrian territory, have directly enhanced the capability of the organization to launch deadly attacks against Israel.

The Security Council has confirmed Israel's full compliance with resolution 425 (1978) and continues to call upon the Government of Lebanon to fulfil its overdue obligations under that and subsequent resolutions. As efforts are made to restart the peace process, it is more important than ever to establish the state of calm envisaged by resolution 425 (1978). First and foremost, Israel calls upon the Government of Lebanon to take effective control of the entire territory vacated by Israel three years ago and proceed with the deployment of Lebanese armed forces to ensure the cessation of the dangerous provocations that have continued on the Blue Line.

Israel further calls upon the Governments of Syria and Lebanon to meet the obligations required of all States to prevent the activities of the terrorist elements operating in the territory under their control so as to ensure the restoration of international peace and security, and the creation of an environment conducive to peaceful negotiations. It is incumbent upon the international community to make clear to Lebanon, as well as to the Government of Syria, that it will not tolerate their continued support for illegal cross-border attacks. These long-overdue actions will serve to ensure stability along the northern border and demonstrate a commitment to peace and security in the Middle East, for the Lebanese, Syrian and Israeli peoples, leading to a comprehensive peace settlement on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

This letter is a follow-up to previous letters concerning the dangerous situation in south Lebanon caused by the illegal attacks perpetrated by Hizbullah across the Blue Line.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter circulated as a document of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly, under agenda items 160 and 36, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Dan **Gillerman**
Permanent Representative